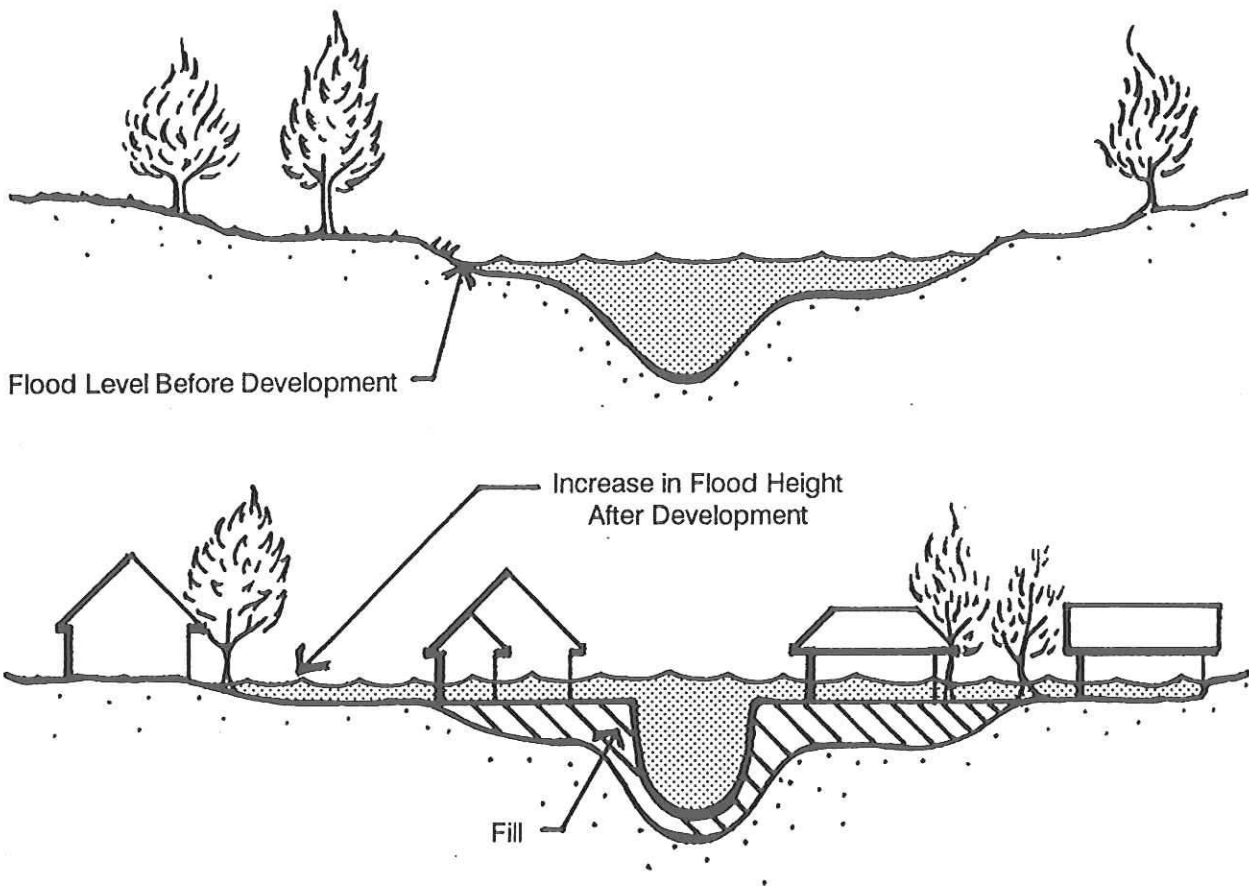


Figure 3-10

Flood Corridor: The top figure shows a floodplain before development. The bottom figure shows changes in the floodplain with development.

Before development the creek channel (or flood area) is wide. With development, the channel becomes narrow (due to fill and structures), percolation is reduced, and velocity increased. Structures located in this area are flooded.



Natural Area Preserves are areas of land or water that are currently under, or may come under, the management of San Luis Obispo County through purchase from a willing seller, dedication of open space land to mitigate development impacts, or through cooperative agreements with the public agencies. These areas are intended to remain in a predominantly natural or undeveloped state so as to provide resource protection and possible opportunities for passive recreation and environmental education for present and future generations.

The decision to acquire any lands for Natural Area Preserves rests with the Board of Supervisors. The management plans for any preserves shall be approved by the County Parks and Recreation Commission prior to implementation.

OSP 17 and 18 address Natural Area Preserves, including the list of proposed Natural Area Preserves developed by the San Luis Obispo County Parks and Recreation Commission and adopted by the Board of Supervisors on September 1, 1992 through adoption of the Natural Areas Plan. Already established Natural Area Preserves and proposed sites for such management plans are shown in Appendix B.

Marine Resources

The county's shoreline and the offshore waters contain valuable open space resources of national and even worldwide significance. These resources are of biological, ecological and economic importance. They include the following:

- * Spectacular scenery, pristine waters and recreational opportunities that attract millions of tourists each year and contribute greatly to the local economy;
- * High-yield fisheries of great importance to the local economy;
- * Sensitive coastal habitats such as the Morro Bay Estuary, rocky intertidal areas, coral communities and kelp forests;
- * Threatened and endangered species such as several species of whales, the Southern Sea Otter, California Brown Pelican, Least Tern, and others;
- * Key whale migration routes;
- * Habitat for large populations of elephant seals, harbor seals and otters;
- * Upwelling of deep ocean waters that provides one of the most significant nutrient sources for marine wildlife in the entire North Pacific Basin; and
- * Benthic (ocean bottom) communities of worldwide significance.

Some of these open space resources are already given an increased level of protection. For example, the existing Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary extends south to the waters off Santa Rosa Creek, Cambria. The California Sea Otter Game Refuge extends to the Santa Maria River at the south county line at the Santa Maria River. In addition, a sanctuary instituted by the state prohibits the leasing and development of oil and gas within state waters off the central coast.

The Morro Bay estuary is of particular interest to San Luis Obispo County because it is an estuary of national importance. In 1995, Morro Bay became a National Estuary, a distinction given to only 28 estuaries nationwide. Morro Bay is also the first California State Estuary, having earned that honor in 1994. The estuary consists of about 2,300 acres of tidal lands and open water bordered by the community of Los Osos, the city of Morro Bay, and Morro Bay State Park.

Essential to the health of the bay is the Morro Bay watershed, consisting of approximately 48,000 acres of agricultural, forest, recreational and urban lands where streams and other runoff eventually flow to the estuary to mix with the saltwater (see Figure 3-11). The watershed contains a wealth of natural resources such as croplands and grazing lands, forests, streams, and other valuable wildlife habitats. The watershed is also home and workplace to thousands of persons, from Los Osos and the city of Morro Bay to Cuesta College, Camp San Luis Obispo, the California Mens Colony, and surrounding rural areas.

The Morro Bay Estuary supports the most significant wetland system on the south central coast. Together, the estuary and its watershed support a variety of valuable natural and human resources activities, including:

- * Crop production and grazing;
- * Aquiculture;
- * Natural scenic beauty;
- * Spawning grounds for fish and marine life;
- * Upland habitat for wildlife
- * Habitat for shorebirds, waterfowl, migrating birds, and more than two dozen threatened or endangered plants and animals;
- * Tourism and recreation, such as fishing, boating, kayaking, golfing, and tourist attraction; and
- * Electric power generation.

All of these attributes are dependent on maintaining the health of the estuary and its watershed. Morro Bay and its watershed are still relatively unspoiled. However, evidence shows that the estuary is threatened by an unnaturally fast rate of sedimentation. Other water quality concerns and loss of habitat also threaten the bay.

AGRICULTURE AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

MORRO BAY WATERSHED

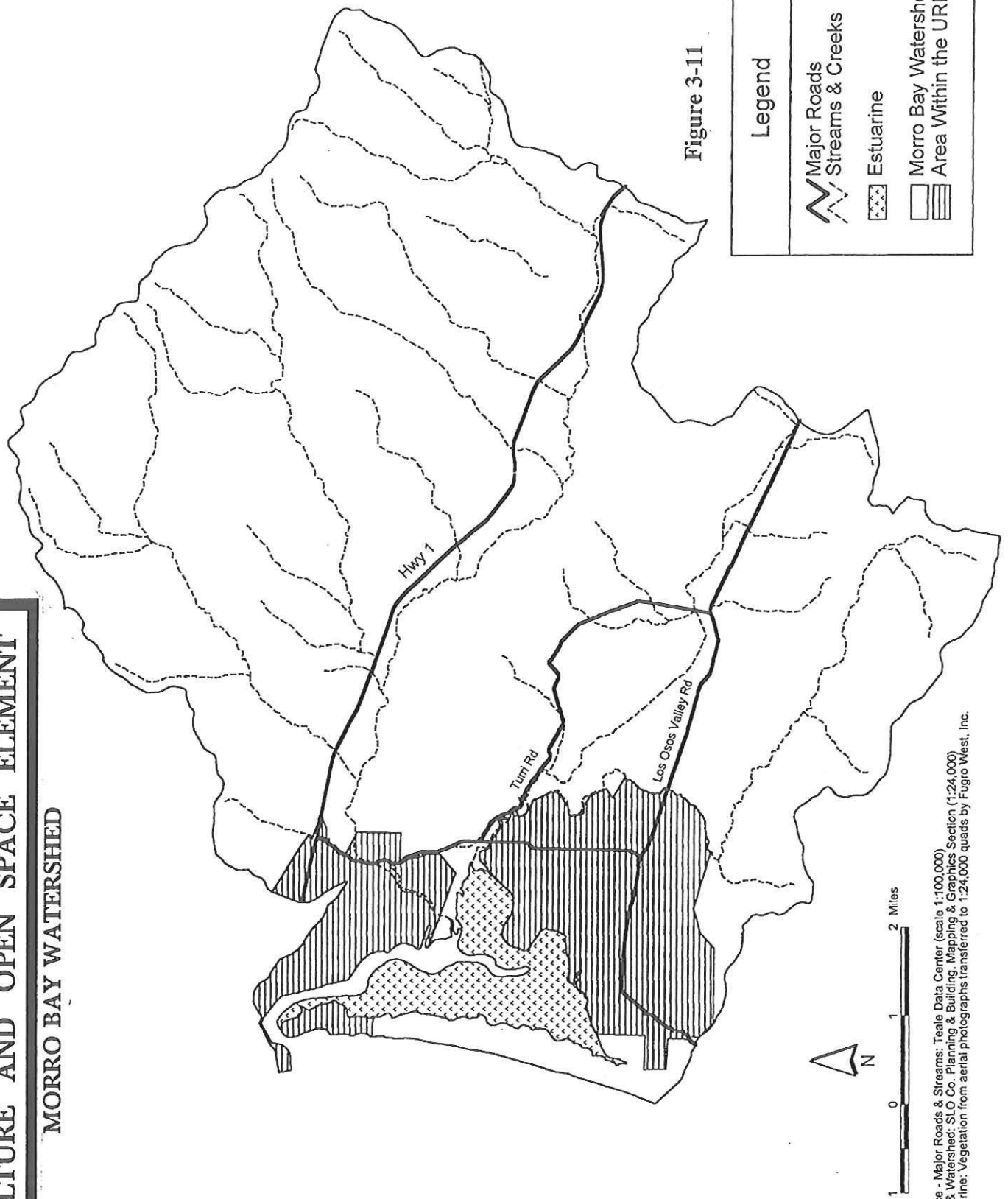


Figure 3-11

Legend	
	Major Roads
	Streams & Creeks
	Estuarine
	Morro Bay Watershed
	Area Within the URL

Source - Major Roads & Streams: Teale Data Center (scale 1:100,000)
 URL & Watershed: SLO Co. Planning & Building, Mapping & Graphics Section (1:24,000)
 Estuarine: Vegetation from aerial photographs transferred to 1:24,000 quads by Fugro West, Inc.

A major effort is now underway to develop a watershed management plan to guide the future of the estuary and watershed. The plan is being prepared using a consensus-based approach under the direction of the Morro Bay Estuary and Watershed Council, an organization of about 50 government agencies, interest groups and landowners that have an interest in the bay. The plan being prepared by the task force is intended to achieve goals such as slowing sedimentation of the bay, maintaining water quality, and maintaining the functioning of the watershed and its diverse habitats. In order to be successful, the planning effort will need long-term community support to ensure the future health of this irreplaceable ecosystem.

Many valuable marine resources are still in need of special recognition and protection, especially from the potential effects of offshore energy development. Although the state and federal governments have primary jurisdiction over offshore water, the county's policies can influence how and where marine resources are protected. This can be done by supporting establishment of a national marine sanctuary. The Offshore Energy Element discusses this and other strategies. They include opposing future oil and gas lease sales in our sensitive marine environment and otherwise influencing the timing, location and impacts of offshore oil and gas development and related onshore activities. In addition to the Offshore Energy element, the LCP also addresses the protection of marine resources.

Open Space Policies 19 and 20 affirm the importance of our valuable marine resources and the county's commitment to securing their long-term protection.

Scenic Resources

There are many unique or outstanding features in the landscape of the county that make it so visually appealing to residents and visitors alike. Many roads and highways have particular scenic attributes that contribute to the pleasure of traveling on them. Currently, only Nacimiento Lake Drive (G-14) is an officially designated scenic highway recognized by the State, although an application has been submitted by the Board of Supervisors to include Highway 1 between the city of San Luis Obispo and the Monterey County line.

The scenic features of the county play an important role in identifying the county as a special place. Protection of the county's scenic environment also encourages the growth of the recreation and tourist industries, which are important to the local economy.

The county's scenic resources should be protected and enhanced, however, that protection should not be at the expense of biological resources. Where these resources may co-exist or be in close proximity to each other, every effort should be made to balance the protection of both the biological and scenic resources.

Many of the scenic attributes in the county occur on lands in agricultural production and designated Agriculture in the county general plan. Protection of those resources are addressed in the Agriculture Element in AGP 30.

This plan identifies scenic roads and highways where scenic qualities should be protected through special development standards within corridors and viewsheds to be identified through future studies. In many instances, the road corridor may be quite expansive with the scenic qualities defined and bounded by distant features and backdrops. In other cases, a corridor may be narrow and offer very little in the way of distant views. However, both circumstances are important since they contribute to the high visual quality of this county. OSP 40 contains a list of scenic roads and highways that should be studied to determine if and where scenic corridors and viewsheds should be located.

This plan does not propose to initiate establishment of any new Sensitive Resource Area combining designations in the LUE for the purpose of protecting scenic resources. Instead, detailed studies of the areas containing the identified resources should be completed as the basis for proposed design standards to be established in the LUO and/or LUE area plans in order to protect the scenic resources.

Scenic resources in the county are addressed in OSP 24 and 25.

The following policies, OSP 13 through OSP 25, address the protection and conservation of the natural and scenic resources discussed above.

OSP13: Establish a Network of Major Ecosystems.

- a. **Identify and establish a network of Major Ecosystems that are representative of the region's most important natural ecosystems. Use public lands, such as National Forests or Natural Area Preserves, as the core for such areas.**
- b. **Work with and support the efforts of local, state, and federal agencies and conservation, environmental, and agricultural organizations and private landowners to establish a Major Ecosystems network.**
- c. **Designation of a Major Ecosystem shall not interfere with agricultural uses on private lands that are either within or adjacent to the Major Ecosystem, as noted in AGP28.**

Discussion: See page 3-48.

Implementation/Timeline: See implementation measures following OSP 15.

OSP14: Protection and Management of Major Ecosystems.

- a. **Protect and sustain Major Ecosystems, including their biological diversity and natural processes.**

- b. On public lands, or where there is a consenting landowner, or where lands have been donated to a public entity, limit human disturbance as much as possible and prohibit development and activities that are detrimental to the functioning of the Major Ecosystem.
- c. Any 1) development of lands that requires a discretionary permit or 2) division of lands that are adjacent to an identified core area of a Major Ecosystem must follow CEQA to limit the types and uses and intensity of development so as to be consistent with the biological diversity and natural processes of the Major Ecosystem.
- d. On publicly-owned lands, or lands where there is a willing owner, prepare management plans that will give long-term protection to biological diversity, restore habitat, and sustain the functioning of the ecosystem.

Discussion: See page 3-48.

Implementation: See implementation measures following OSP 15.

OSP15: Wildlife Corridors.

- a. Identify and protect key wildlife corridors that link habitat areas, including Major Ecosystems and Natural Area Preserves.
- b. Public and private development that requires a discretionary permit or proposes a land division shall avoid disturbance of identified key wildlife corridors unless there is no feasible alternative.
- c. Where feasible, and where a nexus exists with a proposed project, reestablish important wildlife corridors that may have been damaged or disrupted. Consider re-establishment of wildlife corridors and appropriate mitigation for environmental impacts elsewhere on a project site.

Discussion: See page 3-54.

Implementation: The following measures implement the preceding policies OSP 13, 14 and 15 regarding Major Ecosystems and wildlife corridors.

- 1. In consultation with public agencies, environmental, conservation and agricultural organizations, prepare an inventory of the county's ecological communities. Map the location of Major Ecosystems that are of sufficient size to sustain biological

diversity and natural processes. Also map the location of key wildlife corridors that are of sufficient size to ensure continued migration of species.

Timeframe: 36 months from plan adoption.

2. Develop a series of design parameters similar to those described in the discussion of the Major Ecosystems network and wildlife corridors and depicted in Figures 3-8 and 3-9, that will lead to the creation of biologically functional open space. In addition, the design parameters should strive to:
 - a. Maintain viable species populations within their native habitats, with special attention given to keystone species or those species that may be especially vulnerable to alteration or elimination of their habitat;
 - b. Retain functional units of each natural community;
 - c. Give priority to the creation of large, rather than small, areas of habitat;
 - d. Reduce or eliminate activities which disrupt the balance of nutrients in the ecosystem;
 - e. Protect or restore the hydrological patterns in the area;
 - f. Retain corridors for movement of species, especially where there may be migratory pathways or accessways to water sources, including the use of road underpasses or other appropriate techniques;
 - g. Minimize human intrusion into the habitat and along the habitat edges;
 - h. Provide appropriate buffer areas along the edges of the habitat;
 - i. Consider human activity within the area based on the sensitivity of the natural communities found in the area, and strive to eliminate activity that is not compatible with the overall ecology of the area;
 - j. Include a monitoring and feedback system that can provide an ongoing methodology to assess the success of the management program so that adjustments can be made over time that will ensure the long-term health of the ecosystem; and

- k. Clearly note that there is **no implied or explicit right of public access** to these areas under public ownership or ownership of non-profit organizations.

Timeframe: 36 months from plan adoption concurrent with implementation measure #1 above.

3. Work with applicable public agencies and agricultural, conservation and environmental organizations to determine the appropriate types of uses, intensity of development, development standards and management strategies that are consistent with sustaining Major Ecosystems. Amend the LUO and LUE area plans to reflect the uses, development standards and management strategies.

Timeframe: 24 months from completion of mapping of Major Ecosystems per item #1 above.

4. County Engineering, in cooperation with CalTrans and other state agencies, should post "Wildlife Crossing" warning signs and, if needed, reduce speed limits where wildlife corridors cross roads and highways and where animal deaths are known to frequently occur.

Timeframe: Ongoing through environmental review of development proposals.

5. Educate the public about the importance and benefits of protecting entire ecosystems and wildlife corridors. Do this through everyday public contact and by supporting the efforts of conservation and environmental organizations in this regard.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

6. Where there are willing sellers, acquire key properties needed to protect Major Ecosystems and wildlife corridors (see the general implementation measures following OSP 4 for a detailed discussion of acquisition strategies).

Timeframe: Ongoing.

7. Where public lands are to be leased for agricultural purposes, the public entity leasing the land will establish management strategies as terms in the lease to ensure continued compatibility between sensitive resources and agricultural uses.

Timeframe: Ongoing through new leases and revision or extensions of existing leases.

8. When conducting the environmental review of discretionary development proposals in areas of the Major Ecosystems, identify the extent of important resources within and adjacent to the proposed development and the appropriate protection measures to prevent development from adversely affecting the resources.

Timeframe: Ongoing through the review of development projects.

OSP16: Habitat Protection.

- a. **Maintain unique or sensitive plant or animal habitat on public lands; on lands where there are consenting private land owners or land donors; and through the review of proposed land division or discretionary development.**

Discussion: See page 3-54.

Implementation/Timeframe: See implementation measures following OSP 15.

OSP17: Development within Unique or Sensitive Habitat.

(NOTE: This policy and the following implementation measures to establish development standards do not apply within the coastal zone because the LCP already includes detailed policies and standards to protect plant and animal habitat.)

- a. **On public lands; lands where there are consenting private land owners or land donors; or through the review of proposed land division or discretionary development, require new development and land divisions to protect unique or sensitive habitat through the following measures:**
 1. **Avoid significant impacts on the habitat, providing for adjustments where alternatives are infeasible or more environmentally damaging.**
 2. **When significant impacts as identified through the CEQA process, the developer or public agency shall implement county-approved mitigation measures consistent with the existing requirements of CEQA.**
 3. **As an alternative to development, encourage the land owner to designate some or all of the site as a "sender site" in a Transfer of Development Credits (TDC) program.**
 4. **Encourage the use of easements or dedications to protect habitat, especially where it is connected to other large areas of unique or sensitive habitat.**

5. As an alternative to on-site mitigation and habitat protection, consider participation in an established habitat banking or TDC program if the project meets the criteria of the program.

Implementation: Establish habitat enhancement programs, including "habitat banking," to mitigate the effects of development on unique or sensitive habitat, as follows:

1. Continue to identify areas of unique or sensitive plant and animal habitat and amend the LUE to include such areas in the Sensitive Resource area (SRA) combining designation. In addition, refine the existing boundaries of SRA combining designations based on field surveys, environmental impact reports and scientific information. Identification of areas of unique or sensitive plant and animal habitat shall: a) specify the features that need to be protected; b) state why it is important to protect those features; and c) where applicable, establish specific boundaries that define the minimum area necessary to protect the identified features.
2. Amend the LUO and Title 21 to include development standards that will implement this policy.
3. Open space areas created in development projects should be contiguous to natural areas adjacent to the site if possible. If this is not feasible, allow the applicant to contribute environmental mitigation fees into the habitat bank that can be used toward the purchase of important habitat areas.

Timeframe: In coordination with implementation measures specified in the discussion of Major Ecosystems (OSP 13 and 14), Wildlife Corridors (OSP 15), and Natural Area Preserves (OSP 20 and 21).

The following policies OSP 17 and 18 apply to "blueline streams" as shown on the latest U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) quadrangle maps and their associated riparian vegetation corridor.

OSP18: Protection of Streams and Riparian Corridors.

- a. Protect stream and riparian corridors in their natural state on public lands, where there are consenting private land owners or land donors, through the review of proposed land division or discretionary development.
- b. Where appropriate, utilize stream and riparian corridors as part of a network of wildlife corridors.

Discussion: See page 3-55.

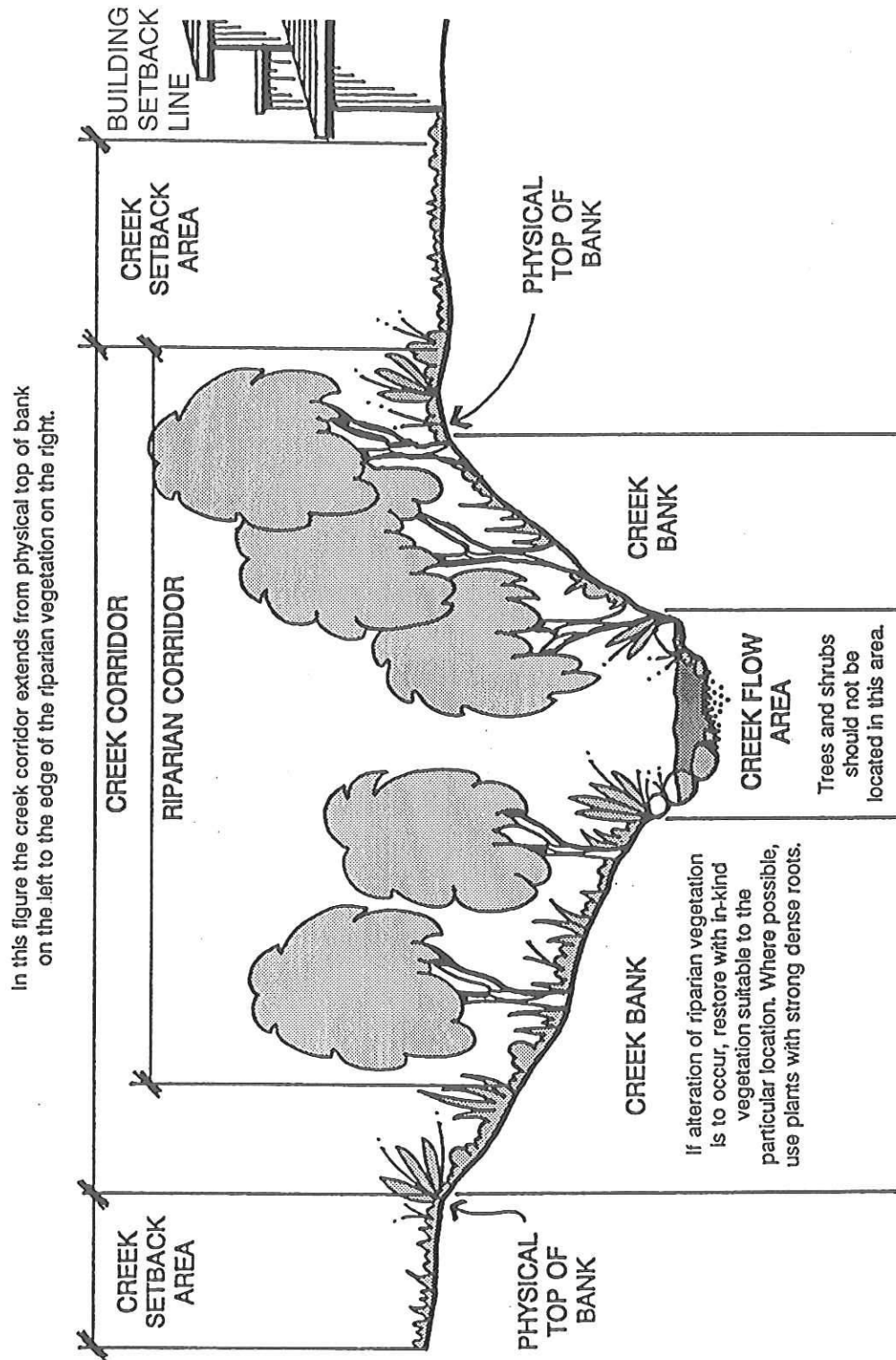
Implementation/Timeframe: See implementation measures following OSP 19.

OSP19: Development within Stream Corridors.

(NOTE: This policy and the following implementation measure to establish development standards do not apply within the coastal zone because the LCP already includes detailed policies and standards to protect plant and animal habitat.)

- a. **On public lands or through the review of proposed land divisions or discretionary development, require projects to protect stream and riparian corridors through the following measures:**
 1. **Establish a building setback of a minimum of 50 feet from the bank of the watercourse or outside the dripline of riparian vegetation, whichever distance is greater, as shown in Fig. 3-12. Locate buildings and structures outside the setback. Provide for adjustments where alternatives are infeasible or more environmentally damaging, but the setback shall be no less than 30 feet consistent with the requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board's Basin Plan,**
 2. **Do not grade inside the established setback, unless the applicant provides justification that alternatives are infeasible or more environmentally damaging. When grading is permitted within the setback, require erosion control during construction and habitat restoration subsequent to grading.**
 3. **Limit the alteration of riparian vegetation.**
 4. **Allow stream alterations for water supply and flood control projects, road maintenance, maintenance of existing channels, improvement of fish and wildlife habitat, or no practical alternative is available.**
 5. **Assure that stream diversion structures protect habitats.**
 6. **When no practical alternative to a significant impact to stream or riparian resources exists, the developer or public agency shall implement a county-approved mitigation and monitoring plan that will lessen the impact. The plan shall be prepared and implemented by qualified professionals under funding by the applicant.**

Figure 3-12



7. Where feasible, and where a nexus exists with the proposed project, restore damaged riparian habitats as a condition of approval for development projects.
8. Where possible, protect stream corridors and setback areas through easements or dedications.
9. During subdivisions, locate parcel lines so as to optimize resource protection (as shown in the concept drawing in Fig. 3-13).

Discussion: See page 3-55.

Implementation:

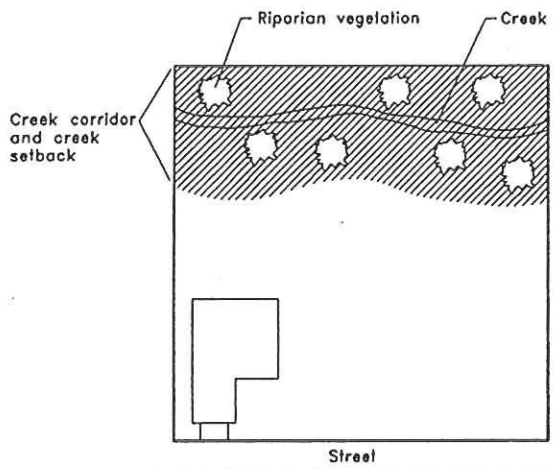
1. Review all blue line streams shown on the current U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute quadrangle maps as appropriate to determine which should be in the Sensitive Resource Area Combining Designation, recognizing that not all blue line streams may be streams.
2. Prepare proposed amendments to the LUO and Title 21 to establish criteria and development standards to implement the measures contained in this policy.

Timeframe: 24 months from plan adoption.

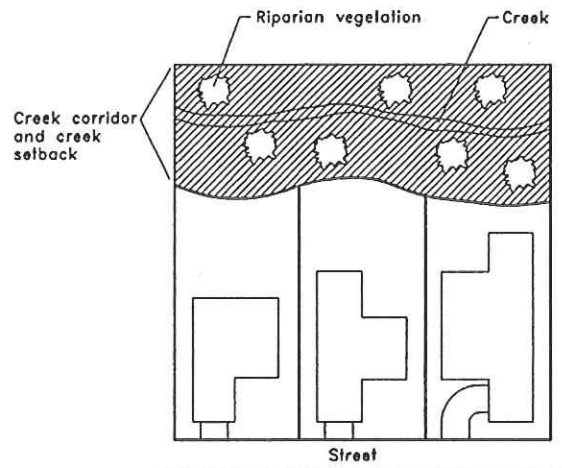
3. The Planning and Building Department, in consultation with the County Department of Agriculture, Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Resource Conservation Districts, should prepare public information materials regarding techniques for preserving and/or restoring riparian corridors.

Timeframe: 18 months from plan adoption.

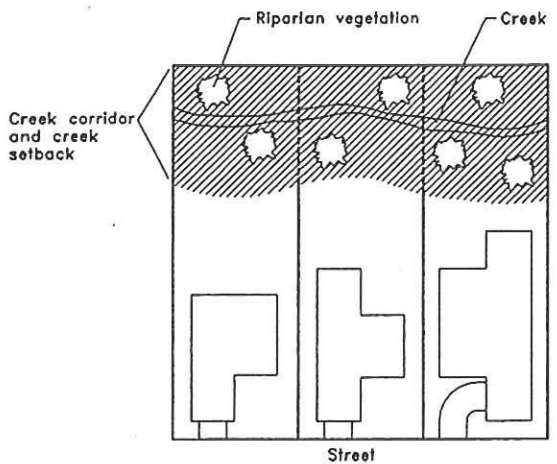
Figure 3-13



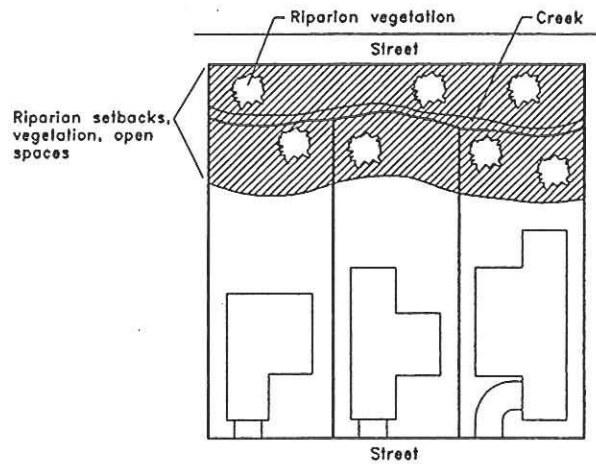
1) Resources and parcel before subdivision



2) Preferred - subdivision which protects the creek corridor and creek setback as a separate parcel.



3) Acceptable - subdivision which protects the cross-hatched area as an open space easement.



4) Preferred - subdivision where open space is between street and rear of parcels.

Natural Area Preserves

The following policies, OSP 20 and 21, apply to Natural Area Preserves as described in the Natural Areas Plan adopted by the Board of Supervisors on September 1, 1992, and future preserves as may be approved by the Board. A full copy of the Natural Areas Plan is contained in Appendix B and contains detailed descriptions of the preserves, including maps, approximate acreage, features, management objectives and restrictions, and other pertinent information.

OSP20: Establishment of Natural Area Preserves.

- a. **Natural Area Preserves will be considered in the areas and locations described in the discussion below and in other locations that are approved by the Board of Supervisors, provided that:**
 - 1. **The location meets the criteria established below in section b; and**
 - 2. **Public access is available or may reasonably become available to the property; and**
 - 3. **There is available public land or, if some or all of the land is privately owned, a willing seller or donor; and**
 - 4. **Funds are available for management.**
- b. **Priority for consideration as a Natural Area Preserve will be given to those lands containing one or more of the following:**
 - 1. **Habitat values and biological diversity;**
 - 2. **Scenic, historic, or cultural characteristics;**
 - 3. **Unique natural features, including unusual terrain or geological features;**
 - 4. **Passive outdoor recreation and/or environmental education opportunities; and**
 - 5. **Corridors adjacent to or connecting public lands or other natural areas.**
- c. **Creation of a Natural Area Preserve shall not interfere with agricultural/conservation uses of the land (also see AGP 27).**

Discussion: See page 3-56.

Implementation: The Department of General Services should prepare a priority listing and proposed work program for approval by the Board of Supervisors and the Parks and Recreation Commission to establish Natural Area Preserves in the areas and locations described below.

Timeframe: Priority listing and proposed work program 24 months from plan adoption for the following areas and locations.

1. **Public Lands: County Ownership/Management (already established).**
 - a. **Upper El Chorro Natural Area:** Located one mile north of San Luis Obispo off Highway One, the area is dominated by Dairy Creek and associated riparian habitat, as well as large tracts of oak woodland and grassland and a vast array of wildlife including large populations of bobcat and turkey. The area is adjacent to other public lands and programmed for trail development leading to U.S. Forest Service property on West Cuesta Ridge.
 - b. **Lopez Lake Natural Area:** Located 10 miles east of Arroyo Grande at Lopez Lake Recreation Area, the area is rugged and primitive and is valuable as wildlife habitat, with frequent sightings of many large mammals including bear and mountain lion.
 - c. **Santa Margarita Lake Natural Area:** Located eight miles east of the town of Santa Margarita at Santa Margarita Lake, the land is dominated with an oak/digger pine woodland forest with extensive areas of chaparral. Riparian habitat surrounds seasonal rivers and streams, ponds and the lake itself. The area provides excellent wildlife habitat for the Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon and Peregrine Falcon.
 - d. **Elfin Forest Natural Area:** Located in the southernmost area of Morro Bay Estuary. Diverse and complex assemblage of natural plant communities, including coastal brackish marsh, riparian woodland fringe, pygmy oak woodland, grassland, coastal dune scrub, and oak-manzanita association. The area supports a documented 25 species of mammals, over 110 kinds of birds and 11 species of reptiles and amphibians.

2. **Public Lands: County Management Proposed.**

- a. **Pismo Lake Natural Area:** Located on Fourth Street in Pismo Beach, this highly endangered freshwater marsh is surrounded by urban development. Considerable filling of the marsh has occurred in the past, with siltation occurring due to careless land development. The area consists of roughly 50 acres of wetlands and the rest is composed of upland grasslands, riparian and oak savannah, and is a resting/feeding stop for migratory waterfowl. Management should occur through a cooperative between the State Department of Fish and Game (owner) and the adjacent communities.
- b. **Big Sandy Natural Area:** The area is located northeast of San Miguel at the county boundary, with some acreage in southern Monterey County. There is riparian habitat on the Salinas River. Acquisition and/or easements will only be sought from willing landowners or donors.
- c. **West Irish Hills Natural Area:** Located south of Montana de Oro and east of Diablo Canyon Power Plant, the area is the southernmost point of the coast range's geomorphic province. This rugged areas contains a variety of plant communities including the coastal sage scrub, coast live oak, Bishop pines, and limited areas of riparian habitat. As many as nine state or federally-listed rare, threatened or endangered animal species may occur in this area.
- d. **Cypress Mountain Natural Area:** This area is located in the Santa Lucia Range south of Nacimiento Reservoir and contains large Sargent cypress trees, several rare and endemic plant species and other unique ecological conditions. Springs, some located on adjacent property, provide water for a varied animal population and particularly abundant reptile and amphibian populations. The area is land locked from public access by private parcels and area property owners are very concerned with possible trespassing into the area that will degrade the quality of the resources that are to be protected. Property owners in the area continue to work with the county Parks and Recreation Commission and Parks Division staff to determine the best course of action for protection of this unique area.
- e. **Tierra Redonda Mountain Natural Area:** This area is located near the San Luis Obispo/Monterey County boundary north of Nacimiento Reservoir. Tierra Redonda is a broad, table-top mountain with precipitous slopes. There are Native American artifacts and remains on the mountain top. Natural communities include grassland, savannah, chaparral, limestone streamside habitat, sand dunes and marshlands, as well as the

predominant oak woodland community. One of the largest concentrations of Chorizanthe species in the world is found in this area.

- f. **Granite Ridge Natural Area:** Located east of the city of Atascadero. The California Native Plant Society has identified several plant species in the area which are on the CNPS List for Endangered Species. The area is rich in wildlife, including a large population of mountain lions and raptors. Isolated deep canyon locations feature the oak/digger pine community. The State Division of Mines and Geology has also identified portions of the areas north of Highway 58 to have significant deposits of construction-grade aggregate. Use of these aggregate resources is an important state and county objective which must be balanced with protection of important species. Acquisition and/or easements will only be sought from willing landowners or donors.

3. **Significant Biological Habitat or Geographic Features.**

The following list of proposed Natural Areas is intended to identify critical habitat types or geographic features which merit preservation. The proposals are not site-specific.

- a. **The Morros Natural Area:** Located in a 12-mile stretch of land from San Luis Obispo to Morro Bay, this area contains a unique continuous stretch of volcanic peaks forming a divider between the Los Osos and Chorro Valleys that extends from Islay Hill northwest to Morro Rock.

For the following Natural Areas, site identification will occur when a suitable area of public land is located or dedicated, or in cooperation with a willing seller or donor.

- b. **Salinas River Natural Area:** Located in an area extending from the dam at Santa Margarita Lake north to the San Luis Obispo County/Monterey County boundary. The dominant community is riparian. The State Division of Mines and Geology has designated portions of the area to also contain significant deposits of sand and gravel. Use of these aggregate resources is an important state and county objective which must be balanced with protection of other resources in the area. The corridor is a combination of public and private ownership that creates access opportunities as well as restrictions.

- c. **San Luis Obispo Creek Natural Area:** Located in an area extending from the city of San Luis Obispo to the Pacific Ocean. The 18-mile stream flows all year from its headwaters below Cuesta Ridge to its ocean confluence at Avila Beach. There are excellent examples of riparian habitat. The creek also supports the southernmost population of steelhead in California.
- d. **Monterey Pine Natural Areas:** These resources are located on various sites in the Cambria area. This grove extends from direct ocean influence zones to the drier interior uplands. Gene variations occur within this range. Various microhabitats within the forest include a number of rare and endemic species.
- e. **Monarch Butterfly Natural Areas:** Located on various sites, groves of trees used as over-wintering sites for Monarch butterflies are critical to the survival of western U.S. populations of this species. Potential sites are located in San Simeon near Sebastian's Store, Los Osos and on the Nipomo Mesa.
- f. **Oak Woodland Natural Areas:** These resources are located in many areas throughout the county. In particular, the Huasna and Adelaida areas contain vast stands of native oaks that are for the most part undisturbed by urbanization.
- g. **Coastal Natural Areas:** These are located in various areas along the coast. California's coastal zone and the coastal areas in this county contain a variety of unique habitat types, diverse biological species and majestic scenic vistas. The threat to these sensitive areas continues despite statewide preservation measures. Of particular concern are intertidal pools and estuaries.

OSP21: Management of Natural Area Preserves.

- a. **All future activities at Natural Area Preserves, including publicly and privately owned land where the owner voluntarily participates, shall be directed by the following goals:**
 - 1. **Protect, restore and enhance the natural resources of the site.**
 - 2. **Provide a significant recreation/education experience for visitors from throughout the county.**

3. Provide an appropriate interpretive program that will increase public understanding and appreciation of the significant natural and cultural resources of the site.
 4. Provide managed public access that emphasizes enjoyment of the site's natural resources, but control or prohibit public access in areas where there are sensitive resources, or the public access is incompatible with adjacent private lands.
 5. Achieve compatibility between protection of the site's natural resources and serving human use demands.
 6. Manage Natural Area Preserves in a manner that is compatible with adjoining ecosystems and adjacent agricultural uses.
 7. Permit only those uses that are of a non-consumptive nature and that are compatible with preservation of the natural resources associated with each site.
- b. Carry out the preceding management goals through resource management strategies that are designed specifically for each preserve (see Appendix B: Natural Areas Plan).
 - c. The county shall take all reasonable precautions and necessary management measures to prevent trespass and damage to adjacent property owners.

Discussion: The preceding goals are a fundamental commitment by the County of San Luis Obispo to provide Natural Area Preserves that serve primarily to protect, restore and enhance the natural resources of the area, while providing passive recreational opportunities. These goals and the strategies to carry them out (listed in Appendix B) are intended to provide guidelines for the creation of site-specific management plans for maintaining the delicate and sensitive biosystems at county-operated Natural Area Preserves. Each Natural Area Preserve will be managed consistent with these goals, although variations will occur depending on the natural resources found at each site.

The intent of these goals is to provide a general land management framework for the operation, maintenance and management of Natural Area Preserves. The management framework would apply to preserves currently managed by the County, or those preserves that will be managed by the County in the future as the result of purchase from a willing landowner, dedication of open space land to mitigate development impacts, or cooperative agreement with another public agency.

Implementation: The Department of General Services should prepare proposed management plans (operational plans) for review and approval by the County Parks and Recreation Commission prior to implementation.

Timeframe: To be determined, based on the priority listing and work program described for OSP 20.

OSP 22: Protection of Significant Marine Resources.

- a. The county should continue to advocate sound energy and coastal protection policies and oppose proposals along the San Luis Obispo County coastline that are inconsistent with county plans and policies.
- b. Make every effort to secure permanent protection and management of the county's significant marine resources using the National Marine Sanctuary, National Estuary and other programs and legislation as vehicles for protection and management.
- c. Establish a national marine sanctuary, or extend the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, to protect and manage the ecologically and economically significant marine resources of the central coast, including those shown on Figure 3-14, and extending to include the southern range of the California sea otter.

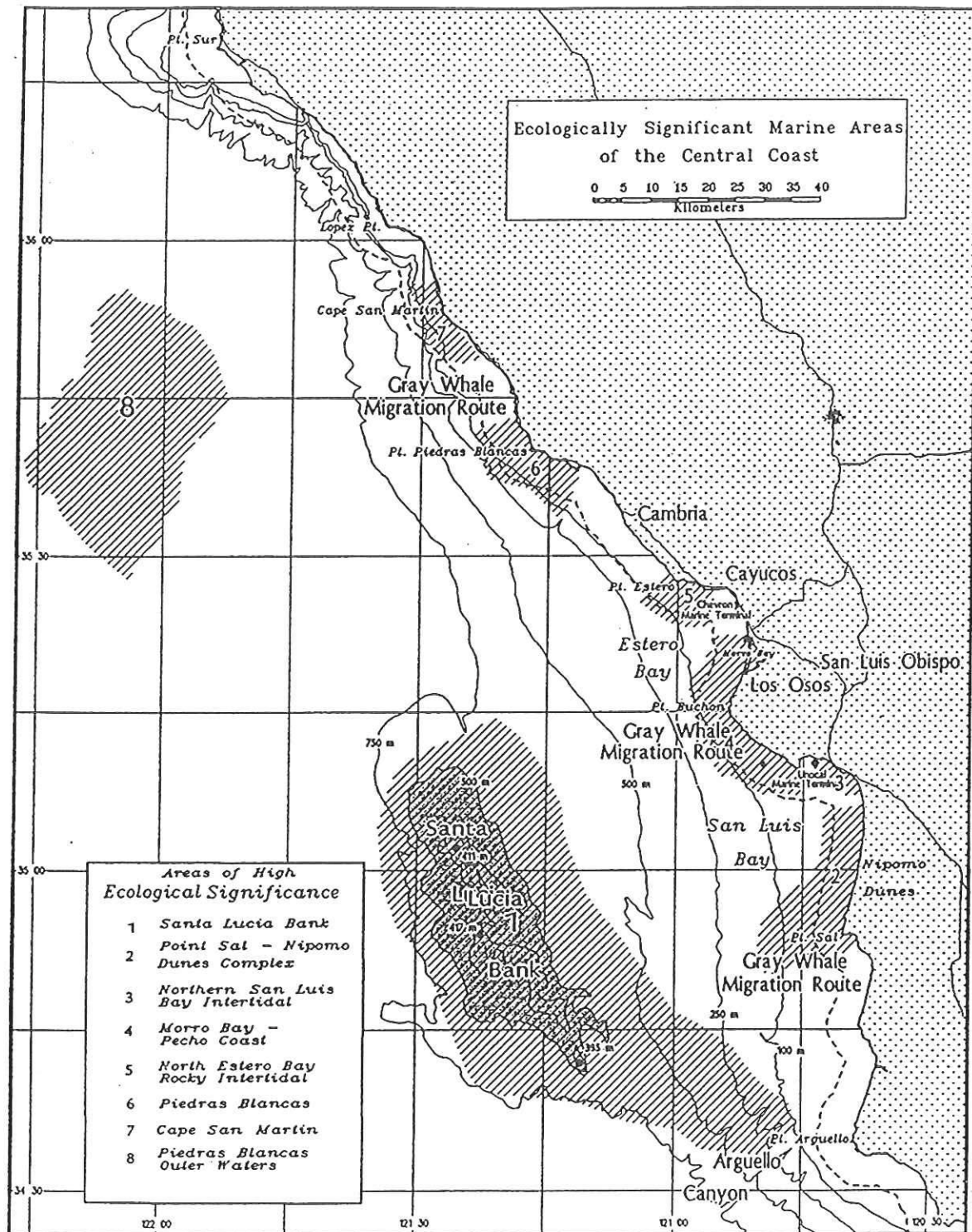
Implementation: Through measures specified in the Offshore Energy Element and the Local Coastal Program.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

OSP23: Morro Bay Estuary and Watershed.

- a. Protect and enhance the Morro Bay estuary and its watershed so that it is a healthy, functioning ecosystem that harbors a diversity of species.
- b. The county, private property owners, the Morro Bay National Estuary Program, the Watershed Committee, and the Regional Water Quality Control Board should continue to work closely together towards the development of a watershed management plan to guide the future of the estuary.

Figure 3-14



Source: Proposed Central Coast
National Marine Sanctuary

- c. Encourage public and private property owners to manage lands within the watershed in such a way that will minimize erosion; siltation; water pollution from sources such as pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers; and inappropriate vegetation removal and grading.
- d. The county should promote measures to protect Morro Bay and its watershed that emphasizes voluntary, cooperative, educational, and incentive-based approaches rather than regulatory methods.

Implementation:

- 1. Upon its completion, the agencies who have participated in the preparation of the Morro Bay watershed management plan should implement applicable provisions through appropriate land use planning strategies, public education, incentives to landowners and through the review of development proposals.

Timeframe: Following completion of the Morro Bay watershed management plan.

OSP24: Scenic Corridors.

- a. Through a public hearing process, establish designated scenic corridors along public road and highways that have unique or outstanding scenic attributes, such as views of dominant hills, mountains, or canyons, views of significant stands of trees or wildflowers, or views of the Pacific Ocean, estuaries, lakes, or streams that parallel the road for a significant distance.
- b. The width of a scenic corridor should be based on a site-specific analysis of the viewshed.
- c. Designation of a scenic corridor shall not interfere with agricultural uses on private lands, as noted in AGP28.
- d. Study the following roads and highways and hold public hearings to determine if and where scenic corridors should be designated.
 - * Highway 101
 - * Highway 1 between the city of San Luis Obispo and Monterey County
 - * Highway 46 West
 - * Highway 41 between Morro Bay and Atascadero
 - * Highway 58 from the Santa Margarita urban reserve line to the Kern County line

- * Palo Prieta Cholame Road/Bitterwater Road/Soda Lake Road from Cholame to the California Valley
- * Elkhorn Road/Elkhorn Grade Road in the Carrizo Plain
- * Nacimiento Lake Drive/Interlake Road from Paso Robles to Monterey County
- * Chimney Rock Road
- * Adelaida Road
- * Santa Rosa Creek Road
- * Cypress Mountain Drive from Santa Rosa Creek Road to Chimney Rock Road
- * Pozo Road between Hi Mountain Road and Highway 58
- * Hi Mountain Road
- * Avila Beach Drive
- * Prefumo Canyon Road/See Canyon Road
- * Orcutt Road from southern San Luis Obispo city limits to Lopez Drive
- * Foothill Road from San Luis Obispo city limits to Los Osos Valley Road
- * Los Osos Valley Road between Foothill Road and Clark Valley Road
- * Price Canyon Road
- * South Bay Boulevard from Santa Ysabel Avenue to Highway 1
- * Pecho Valley Road from Rodman Drive through Montana de Oro State Park
- * Huasna Road from Lopez Drive
- * Lopez Drive from Huasna Road to Lopez Recreation Area

Discussion: See page 3-61.

Implementation: See the implementation measures following OSP 25.

OSP25: Development and Land Divisions Within Scenic Corridors.

- a. Proposed discretionary development and land divisions within scenic corridors shall address the protection of scenic vistas as follows:
 - 1. Balance the protection of the scenic resources with the protection of biological resources that may co-exist within the scenic corridor.
 - 2. Locate structures, roads, and grading on portions of a site that minimize visual impact. Locate structures below prominent ridgelines and hilltops so they are not silhouetted against the sky. Encourage architectural/structural solutions that achieve in the least obtrusive manner the property owner's desire to enjoy scenic views.

3. Use natural landforms and vegetation to screen development. Where that cannot be done, it is preferred to screen development with native vegetation that is compatible with the scenic resource being protected and does not obstruct public vistas.
4. Design structures with colors that are taken from the natural landscape.
5. Minimize the visibility of utilities from public view corridors and place them underground where feasible.
6. Minimize signs, especially freestanding signs, and locate them so they do not interfere with vistas from scenic corridors. Secure removal of non-conforming signs within scenic corridors as part of the review of discretionary development projects wherever feasible.

Implementation: The preceding open space policies for protection of scenic resources, OSP 24 and 25, are to be implemented as follows:

1. Prepare a proposed priority list and work program for consideration by the Board of Supervisors to conduct corridor studies to identify areas that are consistent with the preceding factors so the corridors may be evaluated for presence of visually unique or outstanding features. The corridor studies shall: a) specify the features that need to be protected; b) state why it is important to protect those features; and c) where applicable, establish specific boundaries that define the minimum area necessary to protect the identified features.

Timeframe: Work program - 18 months from plan adoption; corridor studies ongoing based on approved work program.

2. Work with Cal Trans and/or the State legislature to minimize highway signage by using clustered "services at this exit" signs in the county as used elsewhere in California and extensively in Oregon.

Timeframe: 24 months from plan adoption.

3. The county, or applicable public agency, should use extensive California native and/or drought tolerant landscaping to screen existing public facilities within scenic corridors.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

4. Prepare proposed amendments to the LUO or the applicable area plans to establish standards to implement the preceding policies for protection of scenic resources. Tailor the standards to the characteristics of a particular area, using a community based approach as approved by the Board of Supervisors. Within identified scenic corridors, consider establishing design criteria for landscaping, lighting, fencing, signs (especially freestanding signs), scenic outlooks, and other features if appropriate.

Timeframe: Ongoing, based on item #1 above.

RECREATION AREAS

Recreational use of open space lands is essential to the health, well being and quality of life of the population. It also makes a major contribution to the local economy. This plan considers Recreation Areas, as shown on the entitled Open Space Resources in the map in the back pocket, as an important land use that is compatible with other open space.

In this plan, Recreation Areas are an outdoor recreational use of open space, under either public or private ownership. These lands include both passive and active recreation, but the emphasis in this plan is on uses that are in keeping with rural locations.

Recreation Areas include broad variations in types of recreational activities and degree of public use. These areas may be used for multiple activities such as but not limited to boating, fishing, swimming, camping, picnicking, hiking and riding. They may also be used for single-purpose activities such as golfing. Recreation Areas may also be appropriate for protecting environmentally sensitive and cultural resources, and for educational purposes.

Identification of Recreation Areas in this plan does not imply or condone public access onto those lands unless that access is voluntarily given by the land owner.

Recreation Areas may include county operated or proposed regional parks and proposed Natural Area Preserves (see the section by that title). They may also include land managed by agencies such as the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation, federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Forest Service, and conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County. State and county beaches and parks are intensively used recreation areas characterized by multiple activities. In contrast, most National Forest and BLM lands are less intensively used for activities such as camping, hiking, riding, or hunting.

Recreation Areas may also include privately operated recreation facilities. Such facilities can be important because they maintain land in open space while at the same time contributing to the

county's economy by providing recreation facilities for residents and tourists. Privately operated facilities can provide a source of income to rural landowners who establish golf courses, dude ranches, hunting and fishing clubs, health resorts, sport shooting facilities, and campgrounds. Private recreation retreats, such as organizational camps, provide needed recreational facilities for church and youth groups and others.

Some areas, such as the north county, lack parkland to serve the recreational needs of the existing and future population. Recreation Areas help identify areas that should be maintained for public recreation use, or acquired from a willing seller.

Several adopted county plans deal with different aspects of recreation. The County Park and Recreation Master Plan was adopted in August 1988. The plan is primarily oriented to county park needs. It discusses existing outdoor recreation areas, establishes standards for types and acreage of parkland, and identifies general areas of the county for possible parkland acquisition. It also makes specific proposals for regional, community and neighborhood parks and methods for financing parkland acquisitions and improvements.

The County Trails Plan, approved in November 1991, deals specifically with hiking, biking and equestrian trails. It coordinates and supplements the efforts of other jurisdictions involved in providing trails, outlines county policy with respect to trails, and identifies specific trail opportunities, with the emphasis on multiple-use trails.

The 1968 Recreation Plan of the county general plan also deals with recreation needs. It provides guidelines for selecting open space lands for recreation use, but deals primarily with recreational activities. By contrast, the emphasis of this Agriculture and Open Space Element is on open space needs. Work is currently underway to prepare a Parks and Recreation Element of the general plan that will supercede and replace the 1968 Recreation Plan, the 1988 Parks Master Plan, and the 1991 Trails Plan.

In this plan, Recreation Areas are included in the Multi-Use Public Lands designation where there is an existing or proposed recreational resource under public ownership or ownership of a conservation organization. Examples of such Recreation Areas are Montana de Oro State Park, Lopez Lake Recreation Area, portions of the Port San Luis Harbor in Avila Beach, and properties in the Carrizo Plains Natural Area owned by the Bureau of Land Management and The Nature Conservancy. Multi-Use Public Lands are addressed in the following section of this chapter.

Recreation Areas correspond to much, but not all, of the land in the Recreation land use category (zoning) in the LUE. They do not include facilities with private membership, because those facilities are not open to the general public and could potentially revert to other uses if the private recreation use is terminated.

The following policies implement the above discussion of Recreation Areas.

OSP26: Recreational Uses of Publicly-Owned Open Space.

- a. Continue to establish and implement policies and management strategies to provide recreational use of open space.
- b. Work closely with other agencies to plan and provide recreational use of publicly-owned open space.
- c. Park sites and recreation areas shall protect scenic and environmentally sensitive resources, and shall not conflict with agricultural or other rural land uses as addressed in AGP 31.

Discussion: There are a variety of local, state and federal agencies involved in resources that can be used for recreation. The purpose of this policy is to encourage coordination between those agencies to help satisfy their different needs and concerns, make implementation of plans more effective and take advantage of unused public recreational resources.

Park and recreation development should be compatible with sensitive and scenic resources and not adversely affect surrounding rural and agricultural uses (see AGP 31). The update of the existing 1964 Recreation Element should be completed as soon as possible, incorporating applicable policies from several other adopted documents that address recreation needs: the 1988 Parks Master Plan, the 1991 Trails Plan and the 1992 Natural Areas Plan.

In 1994, the Cambria Community Services District adopted Cambria's Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan. The portions of the plan that relates to mini-parks, linear parks, neighborhood, community and regional parks and trails will be considered for possible inclusion into the update of the county Recreation Element. However, the county and the CCSD should work closely together to ensure that the goals of both entities for park and open space needs are adequately addressed (see Appendix I of this Agriculture and Open Space Element for an excerpt from the CCSD plan and an associated map relating to open space in the Cambria area).

Implementation:

1. The county should work with other agencies and community groups to develop park sites and recreation areas and advise the agencies whether such proposals are consistent with the county general plan.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

2. Prepare an update of the Recreation Element of the County General Plan, incorporating the 1988 County Park and Recreation Master Plan and the 1991 Trails Plan. Until the updated plan is adopted, continue to implement the provisions of the adopted 1988 Parks Master Plan, the 1991 Trails Plan and the 1992 Natural Areas Plan.

Timeframe: The update of the Recreation Element is currently underway. Implementation of the existing adopted plan is ongoing.

3. The Department of General Services should develop site-specific plans to be adopted by the Board of Supervisors for each county-operated regional park, based on a priority list and work program for those plans to be approved by the Board of Supervisors.

Timeframe: Proposed priority list and work program within 24 months of plan adoption, with preparation of individual plans based on the approved priority list.

4. Cooperate with appropriate government agencies to protect the Lopez Canyon area and its watershed, consistent with the land use policies in the Huasna/Lopez Area Plan of the LUE and the 1984 Lopez 2000 plan..

Timeframe: Ongoing.

5. Cooperate with applicable agencies to make public water supply reservoirs available for appropriate types of recreational uses.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

6. Encourage agencies to jointly manage sensitive resources through comprehensive leasing agreements that include resource protection measures (also see AGP 31).

Timeframe: Ongoing.

OSP27: Recreation Opportunities with Private Development.

- a. Ensure that new development provides opportunities for recreation that are commensurate with the level and type of development. Ensure that the recreational uses are compatible with surrounding uses and with sensitive resources that might be present in or adjacent to the recreational use, as outlined in the San Luis Obispo County Trails Policy previously approved by the Board of Supervisors on September 6, 1990 (see Appendix H.)

Discussion: The purpose of this policy is to assure that new development, which contributes to the need for recreation, also contributes toward satisfying that need. New development often presents opportunities to provide recreation for the residents of the development and, in some cases, the general public.

Implementation:

1. Encourage new discretionary development and land divisions to provide recreational opportunities that are compatible with sensitive resources or agricultural lands (also see AGP 31), while ensuring that the recreational opportunities will not encourage or induce trespass on adjacent private lands.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

2. Consistent with applicable state laws and county ordinances and wherever an appropriate nexus exists through the subdivision and development process, require public access to adjacent Recreation Areas, Natural Areas, shorelines, lakes, rivers, public lands, and other areas planned for public recreational use. Include measures to ensure that the public areas will not adversely affect sensitive resources or agricultural lands due to increased potential for trespass on adjacent private lands.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

3. Wherever an appropriate nexus exists through the subdivision and development process, acquire easements and dedications for parks and protection of outstanding scenic vistas and other important open space. Such open space includes shoreline areas, riparian habitat, floodplains and other environmentally sensitive areas, archaeological and cultural resources, and historic sites. Refer proposals for recreational use of easements and dedications to the Parks Division staff for evaluation before project approval.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

4. Continue to implement the adopted Quimby Ordinance to ensure that large-scale development projects include appropriate recreational facilities within the project, such as passive recreation areas, play lots, tennis and other courts, and swimming pools, or pay the corresponding in-lieu fees toward the implementation of the needed facilities. Refer development proposals to the Parks Division staff for evaluation before project approval.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

OSP28: Private Recreation Facilities.

- a. **Encourage the development of private recreation facilities.**
- b. **Private recreation facilities shall preserve scenic and environmentally sensitive resources and shall not conflict with agricultural or other rural land uses.**

Discussion: The purpose of this policy is to encourage private development of recreational uses. Such development is desirable because it can provide special recreational opportunities, relieve the burden on public land, maintain land in open space, and provide income for rural landowners.

Implementation:

- 1. Advise the public of suitable locations for private recreational development and encourage such development where compatible with surrounding sensitive environmental resources, agricultural and rural uses.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

- 2. Through the review of discretionary permits for land divisions and development, ensure that proposed private recreational facilities preserve scenic and sensitive features on the project site and do not adversely effect adjacent lands containing sensitive resources.

Timeframe: Ongoing through review of development proposals.

OSP29: Trail Access to Public Lands.

- a. **In accordance with the County Trails Plan, support non-vehicular trail access to large units of public land. Trails should be on public lands or where there are willing landowners.**
- b. **Access trails should not conflict with agriculture or with environmentally sensitive resources.**
- c. **Provide sufficient policing and maintenance so that trails do not result in trespass or in damage to sensitive resources, crops, livestock, other personal property, or individuals.**

Discussion: The purpose of this policy is to encourage non-vehicular access to existing public open space lands where such access does not disturb agricultural and sensitive open

space resources. Such uses should be consistent with the adopted County Trails Plan. Implementation of this access should also include provisions for appropriate policing and maintenance of the trails so there will not be any resulting trespass or damage to adjacent private lands.

Implementation:

1. Encourage the U.S. Forest Service to acquire existing road rights-of-way for public trail access to National Forest land, consistent with the county Trails Plan. The implementation plan should include appropriate policing and trail maintenance provided by the Forest Service so as to minimize potential trespassing or damage to adjacent private lands. Where necessary, fencing shall be required for public trails adjacent to private lands.
2. Access through private land to get to public land should not be permitted unless the private landowner is a voluntary participant in establishing the trail access, and the access is consistent with the County Trails Plan.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

OSP30: Off-Highway Vehicles.

- a. **Work with county departments and applicable local, state, and federal agencies to provide workable solutions to OHV uses.**

Discussion: In this county, off-highway vehicle use has resulted in trespass and destruction of natural habitats. Therefore, the county should coordinate with other agencies to encourage the prohibition of off-highway vehicles on public lands where it conflicts with adopted master plans, is damaging to open space resources, or results in trespass on private property. The county should prohibit the creation of new off-highway vehicle use on county owned lands.

Implementation:

1. The Department of General Services and the Planning and Building Department should coordinate with other local, state and federal agencies to encourage the prohibition of off-highway vehicles on public lands where it conflicts with the adopted plans of those agencies or county plans and ordinances, where it conflicts with uses of adjacent county owned properties, is resulting in damage to sensitive resources, or is causing trespassing and destruction on adjacent private lands.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

HAZARD AREAS

Hazard Areas are lands that need to be set aside or regulated in order to protect public health, safety and welfare. Hazard Areas include lands subject to flood, fire, geologic, and seismic (earthquake) risks. These areas are mapped on the Open Space Resources map in this plan and correspond to areas included in the Flood Hazard and Geologic Study Areas combining designations in the LUE, and the high and very high fire hazard areas in the Safety Element. Hazard Areas can also include man-made facilities such as pipelines, tank farms, landfills, levees, stormwater retention areas, and surface mines that can become attractive nuisances.

Hazards can provide valuable open space for wildlife habitat, watershed protection, scenic viewsheds, recreation, and agriculture. For example, areas subject to flooding usually consist of streams, riparian vegetation and floodplains. Such areas provide valuable habitat, high aesthetic quality, potential recreational opportunities, and the other benefits previously discussed in this plan, but public safety must also be considered. Man-made facilities that create hazardous situations for certain kinds of development can also provide open space opportunities. For example, utility corridors and levees can be used for pedestrian and bicycle trails. Stormwater retention areas, closed landfills and reclaimed surface mines can be used for parks and recreation areas which need few, if any, structures.

The LUO includes existing standards that protect public health and safety and the hazardous resources themselves when development is proposed within areas subject to flood, geologic, seismic, or fire hazards. Also, the LCP includes policies, standards and ordinances regarding coastal hazards.

The purpose of the following policies, OSP 31 and 32, is to protect public health, safety and welfare while encouraging the use of hazardous areas for open space purposes. The implementation measures follow OSP 32.

OSP31: Natural Hazards.

- a. In areas subject to flood, geological, seismic, or fire hazards, encourage open space uses that are consistent with public safety.

OSP32: Man-made Hazards.

- a. On public lands or where there are willing landowners, encourage recreational uses such as trails and parks on facilities such as pipeline and other utility line corridors, storm water retention basins, levees, closed landfills, and reclaimed surface mines. Such uses should be consistent with public safety and consistent with nearby sensitive resources or agricultural uses.

Implementation: The following implementation measures apply to OSP 31 and 32.

1. Adopt a Safety Element consistent with the latest State planning law requirements, to supercede and replace the existing Safety Element and Seismic Safety Element.

Timeframe: Preparation of the new Safety Element is underway, with plan adoption anticipated in 1999.

2. Prepare proposed amendments to applicable sections of the LUO and CZLUO to implement the preceding policies and reflect adoption of the new Safety Element.

Timeframe: 12 months from adoption of the new Safety Element.

PROTECTION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL, CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES

The archaeological, cultural and historical resources of this county, especially those related to Native Americans, are an important part of the history and heritage of this county. Native American peoples are known to have occupied our county dating back at least 9,000 years ago. The Chumash, Salinan and Yokut lived in this area.

Native Americans like the Chumash practice religion and learn about their history at special places such as Whale Cave, near Avila Beach, and Diablo Canyon. These places have special cultural significance and include sacred sites where prayer and spiritual ceremonies have been performed over hundreds and thousands of years. To Native Americans, such places represent their link with the past and are essential to their identity and culture.

Unfortunately, many significant archaeological and cultural sites have been destroyed. Urbanization and uncontrolled public access appear to be the principal sources of destruction. Acquisition of sites is desirable, but funds are difficult to obtain for that purpose. Therefore, the application of special standards for the review of development can be the most effective way to protect archaeological and cultural resources, as well as historic sites. Educating the general public as well as land owners can also help protect these resources by increasing awareness and appreciation of their importance.

There are also important historical resources in the county. As noted in the Historic Element of the general plan, these resources "form an important part of our historic and cultural heritage which, if lost, cannot be replaced" (Historic Element of the Environment Plan, 1974). These resources reflect the important influences on the county by the Spanish mission builders, the Chinese, the colonial settlers, and others who contributed to the rich cultural heritage we enjoy today. These influences are most visibly represented by the examples of the architecture that remain, whether it be Mission San Luis Obispo, the Dana Adobe in Nipomo, the Ah Louie store in San Luis Obispo, or the Cass House in Cayucos. They are all important resources that need

to be protected for the enjoyment of future generations. The Historic Element of the Environment Plan contains a more detailed discussion of the issues affecting these resources and the range of actions that may be taken to protect them.

The purpose of the following policies is to recognize the importance of these resources and to provide coordinated policies in the various general plan elements toward their long term protection. The implementation measures for these policies follow OSP 34.

OSP33: Protection of Archaeological and Cultural Sites.

- a. In consultation with native Americans and archaeological and conservation organizations, identify significant archaeological and cultural sites that should be acquired or otherwise protected.
- b. Protect archaeological and culturally-sensitive sites from the effects of discretionary development by avoiding disturbance where feasible.
 - 1. If sensitive sites cannot be avoided, mitigate the impact of development to the maximum extent feasible.
 - 2. Consult with native Americans in the design of appropriate mitigations.
 - 3. As a last resort, the use of fill to cap sites or the recovery of resources may be permitted.
- c. Encourage acquisition by public agencies, historical, or conservation organizations of the most important archaeological and cultural sites from willing sellers.
- d. Protect sensitive sites from vandalism and unauthorized collection of artifacts by educating the public as well as land owners about the importance of such sites and by admonishing or prosecuting violators, as described in chapter five of the LUO and CZLUO.

OSP34: Protection of Historical Resources.

- a. Protect the character of significant historical features and settings by implementing the recommendation for historical resources found in the Historic Element of the Environment Plan.

Implementation: The following measures implement the preceding policies OSP 33 and 34 regarding protection of archaeological and cultural resources.

1. Prepare proposed amendments to the LUO and CZLUO to place the maximum emphasis on designing new development to avoid impacts to architectural, archaeological, historical and cultural resources; for example, through the use of cluster development and land divisions. For sensitive archaeological sites, the use of fill material to "cap" the site, or the recovery of archaeological resources, may be permitted as a last resort.
2. Prepare proposed amendments to the LUO and the CZLUO so that culturally sensitive and archaeological resources are given the recognition and protection described in the Historic Element of the Environment Plan of the county general plan.

Timeframe: 24 months from plan adoption.

APPENDIX A: USERS GUIDE

APPENDIX A USER'S GUIDE TO THE AGRICULTURE AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

HOW DOES THE PLAN APPLY TO MY PROPERTY	WHERE TO FIND IT			
	GOALS ¹	POLICIES (AGP, OSP) ²	CHAPTER	MAP
1. Is it designated Agriculture?	AG 1		2	Land Use Designations
2. What are the agricultural issues?			2	
a. Land use	AG 1,2,3	AGP 1-8,31,32	2	
b. Land division	AG2,3	AGP 20-23	2	
c. Land conservation & management	AG 1-4	AGP 9-17, 19	2	
3. Is it another land use designation?			2	Land Use Designations
a. Multi-Use Public Lands	OSG 2,4	OSP 6,7,29,30	3	Land Use Des., Open Space Resources, Public
b. Large-Lot Rural	AG3,OSG3	AGP 22, OSP9,11	3	Land Use Des.
c. Small-Lot Rural	AG3,OSG3	AGP24, OSP9,13		Land Use Des.
d. Urban Lands	AG3,OSG3	AGP24, OSP12		Land Use Des.
4. Can the designation be changed?				
a. From Agriculture	AG 1,2,3,4	AGP 24	2	
b. To Large-Lot Rural, Small-Lot Rural	AG 3 OSG 2-4	AGP24, OSP12,13	2,3	
c. To Urban Lands	AG 3 OSG3	AGP24, OSP12	2,3	
d. To and from Multi-Use Public Lands	OSG 2,4	OSP7,20,21	3	
5. What are the mapped open space designations? What are the issues?			3	Open Space Resources
a. Sensitive and Scenic Areas	OSG 1-4	AGP30-31, OSP8-10,13-22,25,26	2,3	Open Space Resources
b. Recreation Areas	OSG 1,2,4	AGP31-32, OSP8,9,20,21,26-30	2,3	Open Space Resources
c. Hazard Lands	OSG 1-4	OSP31,32	3	Open Space Resources
6. What other open space features are important? (may not be mapped in this plan)				Open Space Resources
a. Ecosystems, Streams, Habitat	OSG 1-4	AGP25-27, OSP8-10,13-19	2,3	Open Space Res.
b. Marine Resources	OSG 1	OSP23,24	3	
c. Archaeological, Cultural, Historic	OSG 1,2,4	AGP33-34,OSP34,35	2,3	
Key: ¹ AG: Agricultural Goal ² AGP: Agricultural Policy OSG: Open Space Goal OSP: Open Space Policy				

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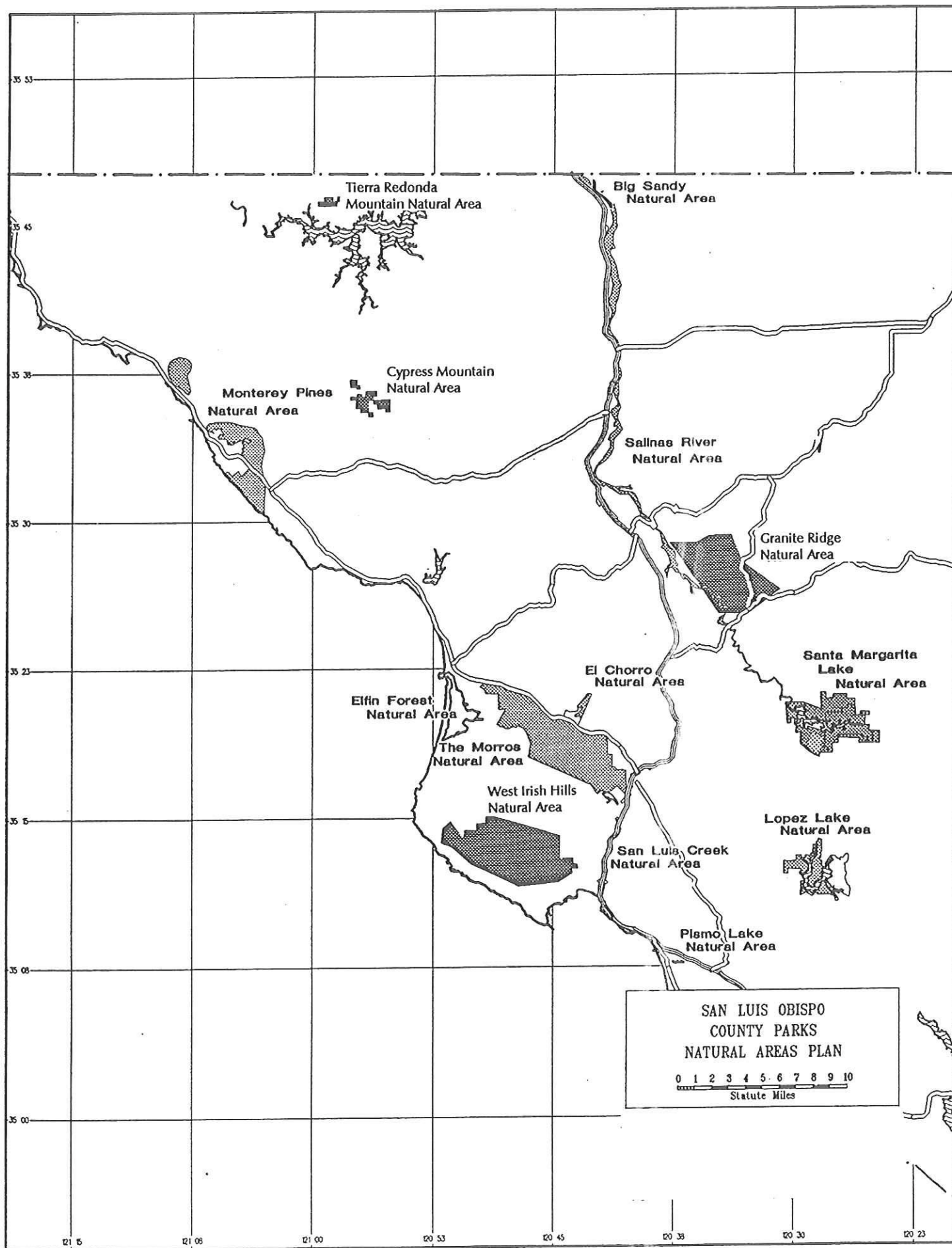
APPENDIX B: NATURAL AREAS PLAN

**Approved by Parks and Recreation Commission
June 18, 1992**

**Adopted by Board of Supervisors
September 1, 1992**

NOTE:

During the public hearings on the Agriculture and Open Space Element several revisions were proposed to the adopted Natural Areas Plan by the staff of the county Parks Division and the county Parks and Recreation Commission. The proposed changes have not been submitted to the county Board of Supervisors for consideration as a formal amendment to the adopted Natural Areas Plan. Text proposed for deletion is shown with ~~strike-over~~, while proposed new text is shown as shaded.



INTRODUCTION

San Luis Obispo County contains an abundant amount of open space, including areas of outstanding scenic value, areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, and areas which serve as links between major recreation and open space sites.

The County, approximately 2,122,000 acres, also includes vast areas of open land which are suited to uses which require open areas, including agriculture, grazing, mining, and the managed production of resources. Much of this land is included in areas managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

Figure 1 illustrates the multitude and scope of local, state and federal agencies responsible for managing a variety of open space resources within the County. Figure 2 outlines undeveloped and total acreage of parklands operated by the Parks Division of San Luis Obispo County's Department of General Services.

SUMMARY TOTAL ACRES OF LAND RESOURCES MAINTAINED BY RECREATION/CONSERVATION PROVIDERS¹	
PROVIDER	APPROX. TOTAL ACREAGE
U.S. Forest Service	239,138
Bureau of Land Management ²	158,186
Dept. of Defense—Camp Roberts	26,000
Monterey County (Nacimiento Lake)	18,000
California Dept. of Parks and Recreation	14,549
San Luis Obispo County Parks	12,447
Nature Conservancy	12,000
California Dept. of Fish and Game	7,471
Cal Poly University	6,051
City of San Luis Obispo	541
County Schools (Rancho El Chorro)	250
City of Paso Robles	93
City of Pismo Beach	66
City of Arroyo Grande	60
City of Morro Bay	48
City of Atascadero	34
Land Conservancy of SLO	25
Port San Luis Harbor Dist.	10
Templeton Comm. Service Dist.	9
City of Grover Beach	8
Creston Comm. Service District	7
¹ Not all noted lands are available for public access.	
² Nature Conservancy cooperatively manages approx 150,00 acres of this land.	

Figure B-1: Recreation/Conservation Lands in San Luis Obispo County

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY PARK ACREAGE		
FACILITY	UNDEVELOPED ACRES (APPROXIMATE)	TOTAL ACRES
Coastal Accessways	2.0	2.0
Halcyon Community Park	14.0	14.0
Lampton Coastal Accessway	2.2	2.2
San Miguel Staging Area	2.0	2.0
Tefft Street Neighborhood Park	2.0	2.0
Specialized Facilities		
Avila Bike Trail	10.5	10.5
Coastal Accessways (25)	0	4.3
Chalk Mountain Golf Course	0	212.9
Morro Bay Golf Course	0	125.0
Rios Caledonia Adobe	0	2.8
<u>Neighborhood and Community Parks</u>		
C.W. Clarke Community Park	2.0	11.5
Cuesta Community Park	0	5.0
Hardie Community Park	0	4.0
Oceano Community Park	0	11.8
Paul Andrews Neighborhood Park	0	1.0
San Miguel Community Park	0	4.3
Santa Margarita Community Park	0	2.0
Shamel Community Park	0	6.0
South Bay Community Park	1.5	6.2
Templeton Community Park	0	3.5
<u>Regional Parks</u>		
Biddle Regional Park	20.0	47.0
Cayucos Beach	0	14.0
El Chorro Regional Park	670.0	710.0
Heilmann Regional Park	60.0	102.0
Lopez Lake Recreation Area	4076.0	4276.0
Nipomo Regional Park	80.0	144.0
Santa Margarita Lake	6,700.0	6,721.1
TOTALS	11,642.2	12,447.1

Figure B-2: Parkland Managed by San Luis Obispo County Parks

POLICY STATEMENT

Approved by Board of Supervisors
September 3, 1991

Open space is an irreplaceable natural resource. San Luis Obispo County presently includes unique open space resources with wilderness, habitat, scenic, recreational, historical, and archeological characteristics which should be protected and maintained for future generations.

It is the policy of San Luis Obispo County to encourage the conservation and preservation of those open space resources by employing a variety of methods. Cooperation among government agencies, private individuals and organizations should be central to those efforts, while respecting the rights of property owners.

The Open Space Subcommittee of the San Luis Obispo County Parks and Recreation Commission was established in order to develop a site specific plan for proposed Natural Area Preserves.

DEFINITION OF NATURAL AREA PRESERVES AS MANAGED BY COUNTY PARKS

An area of land or water managed by the Parks Division of the San Luis Obispo County Department of General Services which remains in a predominantly natural or undeveloped state to provide resource protection for present and future generations.

FACTORS FOR PRESERVATION CONSIDERATION

Priority for consideration as a Natural Area Preserve will be given to those lands meeting one or more of the following factors:

1. Habitat values and biological diversity.
2. Scenic, historic or cultural characteristics.
3. Unique natural features, including unusual terrain or geological features.
4. Passive outdoor recreation and/or environmental education opportunities.
5. Corridors adjacent to or connecting public lands or other natural areas.
6. Greenbelt areas shaping urban growth.

Natural Area Preserves will not be established or managed solely for any of the following purposes, although the presence of these factors may contribute to the rationale for establishing a Natural Area Preserve.

1. Watershed areas for surface water supplies or recharge areas for groundwater.
2. Areas important for protection of public health and safety, having high exposure to risk from fire, flooding, earthquakes, unstable soils or landslides, or excessive noise.

CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF NATURAL AREA PRESERVES

1. Where there is available public land.
2. Where there is a willing private landowner or donor.
3. When funds are available for management.

METHODS OF PROTECTION

A variety of techniques may be employed to implement natural area preservation. Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Fair market value purchase.
2. Donation by landowner.
3. Exchange of property.
4. Transfer of surplus government property.
5. Use of state or federal grants.
6. Dedication of open space land to mitigate development impact.
7. Securing conservation easements.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Management guidelines will be developed for each proposed Natural Area Preserve with concern for: 1) natural resource values, 2) passive recreation opportunities, and 3) environmental education opportunities.

COORDINATION WITH BUILDING AND PLANNING DEPARTMENT

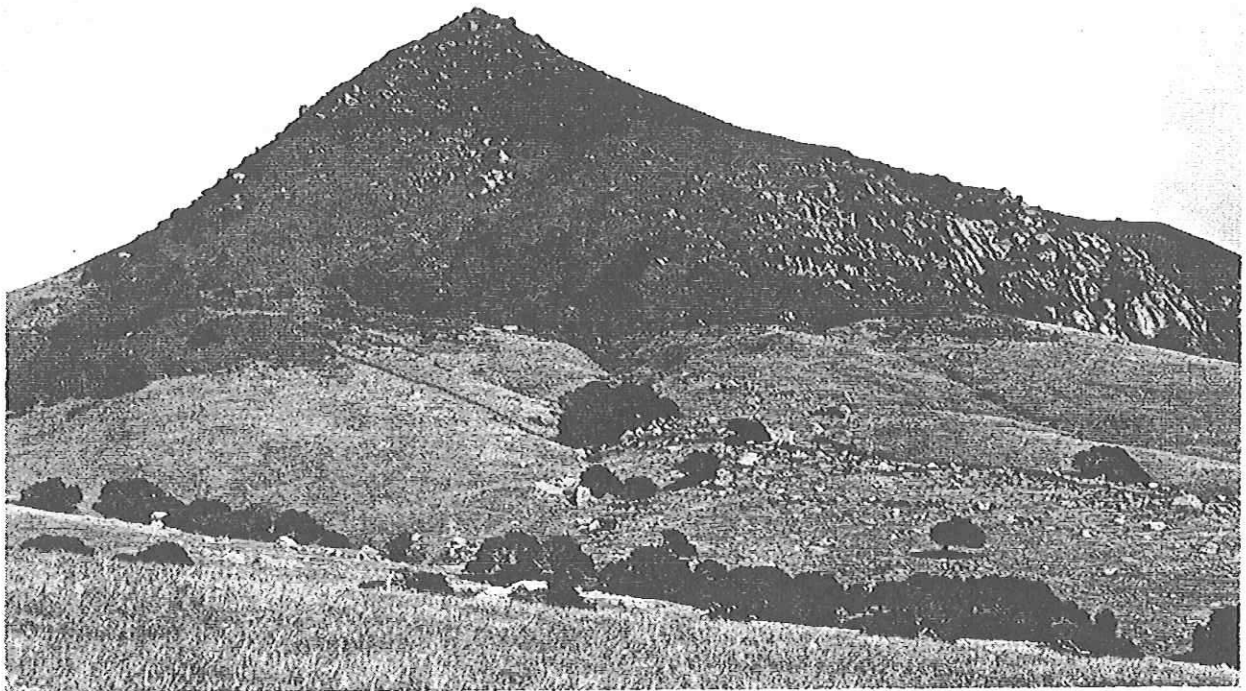
Coordinate Parks Division Natural Areas Plan with the Department of Planning and Building in order to protect significant open space and recreational features through the Agriculture and Open Space Element of the County General Plan.

While the County contains vast open space areas, the majority of persons living in San Luis Obispo County live in the relatively urbanized Coastal and Salinas River regions, and must often travel some distance to enjoy the large open areas.

Failure to provide adequate open space can result in several undesirable effects. Without a plan of natural areas and trails in place, or in the absence of the conscientious application of policies related to open space, new development can quickly consume valuable natural areas. Inappropriate development can also result in the loss of open space uses through the alterations of natural features.

Lastly, conflicting desires for uses of open space lands can result in heated controversy. Off-highway vehicle use within the County has resulted in tremendous conflicts, particularly in terms of trespass upon private lands and destruction of natural habitats. Other conflicts can also occur, such as over-use of sensitive lands for hiking, mountain bicycling, or recreation. Natural area preserves should not be used for purposes which are incompatible with the management goals and strategies outlined in this document or those detailed within site specific resource management plans.

This Natural Areas Plan, along with its guiding policy which was previously approved by the County Board of Supervisors, was developed by the San Luis Obispo County Open Space Subcommittee. This subcommittee was appointed by the San Luis Obispo County Parks and Recreation Commission with the goal of encouraging the conservation and preservation of natural area resources within the County as they relate to park and recreational opportunities. This Plan is intended to be a long range park planning document, complementary to the existing Parks Master Plan and Trails Plan.



MANAGEMENT GOALS AND STRATEGIES FOR NATURAL AREA PRESERVES

The following goals and strategies are intended to provide guidelines for the creation of site specific management plans for maintaining the delicate and sensitive biosystems at County operated Natural Area Preserves. Each Natural Area Preserve will be managed consistent with these goals, although variations will occur depending on the natural resources found at each site. Such management plans shall be approved, or as needed amended, by the San Luis Obispo County Parks and Recreation Commission prior to implementation.

The intent of these goals is to provide a general natural areas land management framework for the operation, maintenance and management of those Natural Area Preserves that are currently under or may come under the management of the County of San Luis Obispo through purchase from a willing landowner, dedication of open space land to mitigate development impact or cooperative agreement with another public agency.

NATURAL AREA GOALS

Goals are a fundamental commitment by the County of San Luis Obispo to provide a Natural Area Preserve that serves primarily to protect, restore and enhance the natural resources of the area, while providing passive recreational opportunities. With this mission, the goals will direct all future activities at the preserve for years to come. They are:

1. Protect, restore and enhance the natural resources of the site.
2. Provide a significant recreation/education experience for visitors from throughout the County.
3. Provide an appropriate interpretive program which will increase public understanding and appreciation of the significant natural and cultural resources of the site.
4. Provide managed public access which emphasizes enjoyment of the site's natural resources.
5. Achieve compatibility between protection of the site's natural resources and serving human use demands.
6. Manage Natural Area Preserves in a manner which is compatible with adjoining ecosystems.
7. Permit only those uses which are of a nonconsumptive nature compatible with preservation of the natural resources associated with each site.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Goal #1: **Protect, restore and enhance the natural resources of the site.**

Goal #1 Strategies:

- A) Identify resources that will provide the fundamental basis for managing the preserve site.
- B) Identify sensitive habitats and limit uses accordingly.
- C) Establish an ongoing resource monitoring and control program to ensure the protection of sensitive habitats.
- D) Where appropriate, initiate a native revegetation program and identify areas for mitigation bank exchange.
- E) Where appropriate, develop a program for the control of harmful non-native species.
- F) Develop a resting program for degraded/overused areas and guidelines for closure of such areas.

Goal #2: **Provide a significant recreation/education experience for visitors from throughout the County.**

Goal #2 Strategies:

- A) Develop a program to actively promote the use and appreciation of Natural Area Preserves to the people of San Luis Obispo County.
- B) Where appropriate, provide barrier-free access to the resource sites.
- C) Coordinate Natural Area Preserves with proposed regional trails.

Goal #3: **Provide an appropriate interpretive program which will increase public understanding and appreciation of the significant natural and cultural resources of the site.**

Goal #3 Strategies:

- A) Develop an interpretive program that offers a significant experience to all County residents.

- B) Recommend informative and visually low-profile interpretive walk nodes that promote both the visual and environmental qualities of the Natural Area Preserve.
- C) Develop a volunteer interpretive program that is coordinated through the County's Park Division.
- D) Develop an environmental education program for school age children and encourage the use of the Natural Area Preserves by educational organizations.

Goal #4: Provide managed public access which emphasizes enjoyment of the site's natural resources.

Goal #4 Strategies:

- A) Establish passive recreation opportunities that do not degrade or interfere with environmental resources at each site.
- B) Establish recreation use areas that do not degrade or interfere with environmental resources at each site.
- C) Enhance existing recreational use areas without further disturbances to the environment.
- D) Eliminate recreational uses that are incompatible with sensitive resources, i.e., off-road vehicles.
- E) Focus recreational uses to provide an interpretive and educational experience.
- F) Establish carrying capacities and seasonal limits for compatible recreational use.

Goal #5: Achieve compatibility between protection of the site's natural resources and serving human use demands.

Goal #5 Strategies:

- A) Limit development and activity within each Natural Area Preserve which is inconsistent with environmental protection of the site.
- B) Initiate a positive and informative signing system with an emphasis on environmental education.
- C) Establish a coordinated ordinance and regulation enforcement plan for each site.

- D) Establish a resource monitoring system to assess human impact on each preserve.
- E) Establish guidelines for closure of areas to recreational needs to protect the site's natural resources.

Goal #6: Manage Natural Area Preserves in a manner which is compatible with adjoining ecosystems.

Goal #6 Strategies:

- A) Establish a coordination program with other environmental and public agencies.
- B) Establish a coordination program with adjoining private property owners providing protection to the natural resources of each site.
- C) Identify critical interface areas and develop a management program that supports diverse ecosystems.

Goal #7: Permit only those uses which are of a nonconsumptive nature compatible with preservation of the natural resources associated with each site.

Goal #7 Strategies:

- A) Identify compatible and incompatible activities at each site.
- B) Establish guidelines for compatible activities at each site.
- C) Periodically evaluate the impact of activities allowed at each site for potential incompatibility.
- D) Develop an educational program for site users stressing nonconsumptive activity.